



International Council of Christians and Jews

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Statement on attempted ban on circumcision

Martin Buber House, Heppenheim, Germany

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The International Council of Christians and Jews received a request from our member organization in Sweden to help them combat the proposed ban on circumcision. Similar laws have been suggested in other places, as well. We are sending this to you as an initial response. Hopefully, within the next few weeks, we will send out a longer and more detailed booklet, with more resource material.

Please let us know if this is helpful or if there are other ways in which we can give you support in this and other struggles.

"The International Council of Christians and Jews notes with growing concern efforts by cultural and political leaders in some countries to deprive parents of their time-honored right to practice male circumcision as a religious or communal initiation ceremony.

For thousands of years, male circumcision has ritually marked the religious and cultural identity of many millions of Jews, Muslims and some Eastern Christians. Indeed, at certain times in history, the prohibition of male circumcision was specifically intended to destroy religious identity.

ICCJ maintains that the decision to circumcise their sons is a religious right of parents. The practice is not harmful and there is no statistical or medical warrant for the rhetoric of "mutilation" or "child abuse" used by some who seek to ban the ritual. In fact, current anti-circumcision campaigns sometimes carry antisemitic, Islamophobic or xenophobic overtones and should be deplored as such.

Criminalization of the practice may actually bring about a dangerous consequence, in that some families — committed to the exercise of their religious traditions — will go underground and do the procedure in less safe and less hygienic conditions.

We call upon our member organizations throughout the world to oppose these campaigns as a violation of the free exercise of religion."